

Adecco

Finance

better work, better life



Guide to effective Interviewing

Proven tips on how to be successful at job interviews

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Win the job you really want

Some people can go an entire career without finding their “dream job”. So, when you have the opportunity to land the perfect position, you have to be sure you are ready. You must excel at presenting your marketable skills and experience to potential employers. In other words, you have to be an effective interviewee.

There are proven ways to get beyond the typical interview and make yourself stand out from all the other candidates. That’s what the professionals at Adecco Finance are all about. And that’s why we’ve developed this guide.

We’ve put together our most valuable tips and guidelines to help you with the interview process. In addition, we’ve provided you with the questions and worksheets to assist you in formulating your thoughts and interview strategy.

After years of experience with the sharpest candidates and the toughest clients, we have a very good idea of what works in an interview and what doesn’t. You’ll find all the information you need to prepare for and win the job you want!



Interview preparation

Remember, the interview is the best opportunity to gain insight into the position and company and determine how your experience and talent can contribute to the company's growth and profitability.

Know the company.

Find out as much about the company – its history, its current situation and its future – as you can. Sources include:

- Your recruiter
- The internet
- Periodicals and trade journals
- Annual reports
- Friends and business associates

Know the position.

Have a thorough understanding of the position, its duties and primary responsibilities, and what is expected.

Be prepared to ask good questions:

- Who has been successful and why?
- Who has failed and why?
- Who does the position report to?

Know yourself.

Review your career history thoroughly:

- Review all dates, positions, duties, responsibilities and accomplishments
- Know your strengths and weaknesses
- Be prepared to cite specific examples of achievements and how these experiences can help the company solve some of its problems
- Concentrate on your most recent positions, but don't neglect your early career
- Reflect on your successes so you can adequately impart your strengths when given the chance! Remember, the prospective employer will make his or her hiring decision based upon these key factors:
 - Attitude and business poise
 - Image, presentation and communication skills
 - Experience and skill set
 - Education and certificates
 - Transferable industry and technical background

Be prepared & confident

Selling yourself to a prospective employer in 45 minutes is enough to make anyone a bit nervous. There's a simple way to overcome nerves: just practice interviewing. Ask your recruiter, a spouse, a friend – anyone you trust – to conduct realistic interviews and to provide constructive criticism.

Tell the employer why you are interested in the opportunity / company.

(Use this space to formulate your thoughts and capture your best attributes.)

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

Tell the employer why you are the most qualified person for the position.

(Use this space to highlight your areas of expertise and major accomplishments.)

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

Talk to your recruiter about specific issues that may be addressed in the interview. Learn about the interview style of those with whom you'll be meeting. Your preparation will allow you to enter the interview relaxed and confident allowing you can fulfill the needs of the company.

Interviewing tips

Do

- **Arrive early to the interview.** We recommend you get there at least 15 minutes early.
- **Bring an extra copy of your resume,** just in case.
- **Remember to turn off your mobile phone.** You don't want to rudely interrupt your interviewer or stop the interview short.
- **Fill out all applications neatly and completely.** Write "negotiable" in the salary section.
- **When meeting the interviewer mirror their demeanour.**
- **Be enthusiastic about the position and the company.** Respond positively to the interviewer's questions whenever possible. If you are not interested in or energized by your response, how can you expect the interviewer to be?
- **Stress your achievements and accomplishments.** Quantify the confidence other employers have placed in you. Do this by stressing specific facts, figures and measurable accomplishments.
- **Answer questions honestly and directly.** Interviewers want candidates they can trust. Honest and direct answers are extremely disarming. If you have to discuss negative experiences, point out what you learned from them and why you won't make the same mistakes again.
- **Answer the question that's asked.** You should not intentionally ignore a question by answering a different question or by asking a question yourself. If you are unsure about the question, ask the interviewer to repeat it.
- **Organize your answers.** Consider ways to give your answer structure, either by organizing your response chronologically or organizing your points in order of their importance.
- **Ask specific questions.**
- **Sell your attitude during the interview.**
- **Be positive about your reason for leaving your current job or any previous jobs.** The key word to remember is "more." You want more challenges, more responsibility, more opportunity, etc. If you've been fired or laid-off, stress how much you learned from the experience and how it has helped you become even better at what you do.
- **Make the job you're interviewing for your primary objective.** Frame your answers so that you let the interviewer know that you see this job as a means to achieving your ultimate career goals.
- **Call your recruiter immediately after the interview.**



Don't.....

- **Do not discuss salary or benefit packages.** Remain open. Let your recruiter handle these sensitive negotiations.
- **Do not answer questions with a simple "yes" or "no".** Sell yourself by using examples and paint a clear picture of where, when, how, what and why you did it. Role play some responses before the interview. Practice makes perfect.
- **Do not ramble on, answer questions clearly and succinctly.** When requested to "Tell me about yourself," limit your answer to one or two minutes, highlighting personal and professional achievements.
- **Do not make derogatory remarks about your previous or present employers.**
- **Tell your possible employer what you are going to do for them NOT what they can do for you.**



First impressions

In the search for a job, the interview is often the single most important factor in getting that position you've been looking for and first impressions really count. In relation to "dress code"; dress professionally and err on the side of conservative. Regardless of the type of job you're after, everyone presents a more professional image in proper business attire.

Dress for success

Men:

- A conservative suit in dark blue or dark grey with a long-sleeved white shirt. The tie should be conservative, but stylish. Dark socks with dark, freshly shined shoes.
- Jewelry should be limited to no more than a wristwatch and wedding ring.
- Fingernails should be clean and trimmed.
- Facial hair should be clean-shaven.

Women:

- A business suit or conservative dress in a subdued colour is best. Dress in today's styles but keep the hemline close to knee-length and keep blouses modest.
- Hosiery should be worn at all times, regardless of weather conditions. Shoe heel height should be moderate and comfortable – shoes should be freshly polished.
- Jewelry should be minimal and in good taste.
- Nails should be well manicured and polished in clear or a light conservative colour.
- Make up should be tastefully and lightly applied.

Sample questions

During the interview, you will be asked difficult questions. These questions are designed to see how you will react under pressure and in unfamiliar territory. There are no “standard” answers to these questions. Interviewers ask different questions and look for different responses. However, by being familiar with the types of questions you may be asked, you will give yourself the opportunity to answer these questions comfortably and confidently. We have included a list of typical stress questions and some examples of how they might be answered.

Use the space provided to write down your thoughts.

What are your short-term objectives? Long-term objectives?

What do you look for in a job?

What is the difference between a good position and an excellent one?

Why are you leaving? Why did your business fail?

Why did you choose to interview with my organization?

What can you do for us that someone else cannot do?

Why should we hire you?

Do you work well under pressure, deadlines?

How are you best managed?

How has your early career or background influenced your progression and / or current management style?

How has your management style changed over the years?

What kind of salary are you seeking and why?

What are the most important rewards you expect in your career?

What are your five biggest accomplishments in your present or last job? In your career?

What is your biggest strength? Weakness?

What references can you give to us?

What qualifications do you have that make you think you will be successful?

In what ways do you think you can make a contribution to this firm?

How long would it take you to make a contribution to this firm?

How long would you stay with us?

If you could start again, what would you do differently?

How do you rate yourself as a professional? As an executive?

What new goals or objectives have you established recently? Why?

How have you changed the nature of your job?

What qualities have you liked or disliked in your boss?

What was the most difficult ethical decision you have ever had to make?
What was the result?

Why have you not obtained a job so far?

What aspects of your previous jobs have you disliked?

Would you describe a few situations where your work was criticized?

How would you evaluate your present firm?



Some recommended answers

The following are key points you may want to consider when faced with some common interview questions:

What is wrong with your present firm?

Make sure you do not come across as being negative. Explain how you have enjoyed working there and that there are good people in management. Express that you are looking to handle additional responsibilities and that opportunities do not exist in your current position. You are looking for an opportunity to achieve this career growth.

How long would it take you to make a contribution?

You want to sound motivated and determined but do not over promise. Explain that once you have understood the operating environment and people, you have the proven skills to make a contribution in a very short time. You could ask a question like; "What do you feel will be the main focus of the position for the first six months? "

Why are you leaving your present position?

Again, try not to be negative about your current employer. Consider the following answer; "I enjoy my work, but I am anxious to expand my knowledge and take more responsibility. These opportunities do not exist in my current position."

If you are interested in the position, ask for it, for example; "I am very interested in your company. I am confident that I can do an excellent job for you. What is the next step in your hiring process?"

As we indicated earlier, there are no "standard" answers to these questions. Review the questions and your responses. While some of the questions seem difficult, the keys to answering effectively are to be direct, truthful, positive and succinct!



Questions to ask

An interview involves an exchange of information. Let your interest show by asking questions. In fact, prepare some questions to bring with you. Visit the company's website, get to know what the company is about, and you're sure to come up with two or three questions that will impress your interviewer. Here are some questions you can ask that will help you learn more about the position and the company and help you better understand the interests and objectives of the interviewer:

- Who are the major competitors and how do they compare in terms of product, market share, methods of marketing, strengths and weaknesses?
- Tell me about the history / growth of the company.
- In the recent history of the company, what has been the biggest advance and what has been the biggest setback?
- What is your highest priority in the next six months and how could someone like me help?
- Tell me about a typical day.
- Tell me about your training program.
- What are the characteristics of your top people?
- Where do you see your company going in the next few years?
- What are the three main qualities you are looking for in a candidate?
- How do you see me fitting in with your company?
- If I were to ask your top person what he/she likes most/least about the company, what type of response would I get?
- How do I compare with other qualified applicants?
- Do you have any hesitations about me being successful with your company?
- What does your interview process entail?
- When may I return and meet some of the people with whom I would be working?

Closing the interview

If the interviewer has failed to elicit some important information about you, make that information known before you leave.

Lastly, always find out what the next steps will be and when they are likely to occur.

How to handle remuneration

The question of compensation can be very sensitive and often requires extended negotiations to reach a figure that is fair and acceptable to both the company and the individual. Some points to remember:

- **Most companies want to make a fair offer.** They want to bring new employees on board at a salary level that provides incentive to change jobs — and one that is also consistent with the company’s existing salary structure for that position.
- **The days of 20% and 25% increases in compensation are gone.** Inflation continues to be at historical lows and companies remain focused on maintaining consistency in salary structures. With economic growth in many industries leveling off, be realistic in your expectations.
- **The position / opportunity is the single most important element of your decision.** No amount of money will make a poor position or company a good one. A quality position and the opportunity to work with people in a dynamic work environment offers many rewards that money cannot buy.
- **Be flexible.** Compensation packages are a combination of salary, bonus, titles and additional benefits. These elements can be arranged/re-arranged — sometimes very creatively — to satisfy both the individual and the company.
- **Keep your recruiter involved.** Part of our job is to handle sensitive negotiations and move both parties to a fair and acceptable compensation package. We can often offer alternatives that will satisfy both parties. Additionally, our third-party involvement can help to keep sensitive negotiations on a professional level.

If you are asked for what salary you are looking for, try to avoid quoting a specific figure. Attempt something like this; “I am very interested in the opportunity and I feel I can make a meaningful contribution. I am currently earning _____ per year. I would be open to a competitive offer”. It is best not to name a figure if at all possible so as not to under or over price yourself.

We advise to discuss all relevant salary and benefits with your recruiter.

Phone interviews

Phone interviews are frequently the first step in the interviewing process.

Here are a few tips to help you succeed:

- Work with your recruiter to set up a specific time for the call. This will allow you to be fully prepared to conduct an effective interview.
- Treat the phone interview just as you would a personal, face-to-face interview. Just because it is over the phone does not mean that you should take it lightly.
- Make sure the phone you plan to use for the call is of high quality. Avoid using mobile phones.
- If you have an answering machine / voice mail, please make sure your recording is both courteous and professional.
- Make sure family members know how to answer the phone and take messages in your absence. Keep a notepad by the phone for messages and reinforce how important their cooperation is to search success.
- Be aware of any potential distractions (eg. music, television, background conversations, etc). Plan to sit in a quiet room or area where you can speak and think in a productive manner.
- If you have the “call waiting” feature on your phone, it is best not to interrupt your conversation to answer a call.
- If you have a bad connection and / or difficulty hearing the other person, offer to call them back.
- Be fully prepared with your notes in regards to:
 - The company
 - The position
 - Yourself (resume)You will come across as an organized and articulate interviewee.

Again, do not take this step in the interview process lightly. This is a great opportunity to sell yourself and to find out more about the position.

Last, but certainly not least, the phone interview is the opportune time to set up your face-to-face meeting. Don't be afraid to ask for the appointment! Have your calendar at hand so you may suggest dates that would be convenient to interview.



The follow up letter - your chance to stand out

Effective follow-up gives you the chance to say things you have forgotten to say, or to correct things you wish you had said differently. More importantly, it distinguishes you from other candidates.

To gain full advantage of this opportunity, here are a few points to consider:

- Send the follow up letter as soon as possible. This allows you to convey a sense of urgency and a high interest in the position. Ideally next day.
- Be as brief as possible. It shows respect for their time.
- The body of the letter should address four main points:
 1. Thank them for their time
 2. Express interest and enthusiasm in the company and the position
 3. Using the manager's own words from the interview, highlight your own experiences and accomplishments that amplify your qualifications
 4. Ask for the next interview

Have someone carefully proofread your letter. Also consider sending the document to your recruiter for a final proof (we ask you to do this in order to avoid a letter being sent out that does not represent you well). Based on your recruiter's experience, they may recommend some corrections or changes.

Sending thank-you letters via email is on the impersonal side, so we recommend avoiding it, unless it is necessary due to timing or special circumstances.

If emailing is necessary, always try to send the letter as an attachment.

Sample follow-up letter

Date

Mr John Smith
Vice President
XYZ Company
1234 South Street
Anywhere, XX 12345

Dear Mr Smith,

I appreciate the time spent with you discussing XYZ Company and the _____ position. It was a pleasure meeting with you, _____ and _____. I feel my qualifications and skill set in _____, _____ and _____ reflect those necessary to be successful at XYZ Company.

At ABC Corporation, I successfully installed a state-of-the-art _____ system on-time and under-budget, as well as managed a staff of up to fifteen professionals and clerks. I am confident that I have experience and drive to successfully manage the _____ Department.

I feel an even greater excitement level about the opportunity because it will allow me to attain my goals of _____, _____ and _____.

I look forward to our next meeting to discuss this in greater detail.

Yours sincerely,
[your name]

What to avoid

- Poor personal appearance
- Lack of interest and enthusiasm
- Over-emphasis on the money
- Criticism of past employers
- Failure to maintain good eye contact with the interviewer
- Limp handshake
- Being late for the interview
- Not asking detailed enough questions about the position
- Not enough detail when responding to the questions asked by the interviewer
- Not able to express yourself clearly
- Lack of planning for career; no purpose or goals
- Lack of confidence; ill at ease
- Lack of factual information
- Lack of manners, courtesy
- Lack of vitality
- Indecisiveness
- Coming across as merely “shopping around”
- Cynicism
- Being intolerant
- Inability to take criticism / not open to being mentored
- Being overbearing, overaggressive, conceited; “know-it-all”.



Adecco SA, a Fortune 500 company, is the global leader for HR Solutions with a worldwide network of 33,000 employees and over 6,600 branches in 70 countries. The headquarters is in Switzerland. Every day throughout the globe over 300,000 customers and 700,000 project consultants put their trust in Adecco.

With over 50 years of experience in the HR staffing market, Adecco Switzerland has a network of 50 locations and close to 100 branches.

Adecco Switzerland has ten business lines, each specializing by industry and function:

- Construction
- Electro
- Finance
- Hotel & Catering
- Human Capital Solutions
- Industrial
- IT & Engineering
- Medical & Science
- Office & Administration
- Sales, Marketing & Events

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**Do you want to learn more about being
an effective interviewee?**

Your Adecco Finance representative can help you develop your interview strategy, give you a tremendous advantage over other candidates and put you on your way to landing your dream job.

Contact us today.

Adecco Finance
Papiermühlestrasse 77
3014 Bern
Tel. +41 31 310 10 60
bern.finance@adecco.ch

Rue du Marché 28, CP 3055
1211 Genève 3
Tel. +41 22 718 44 90
geneve.finance@adecco.ch

Löwenstrasse 14
8023 Zürich
Tel. +41 44 229 93 90
zuerich.finance@adecco.ch